

A defence of the British school of medal engraving / by Richard Sainthill.

Sainthill, Richard

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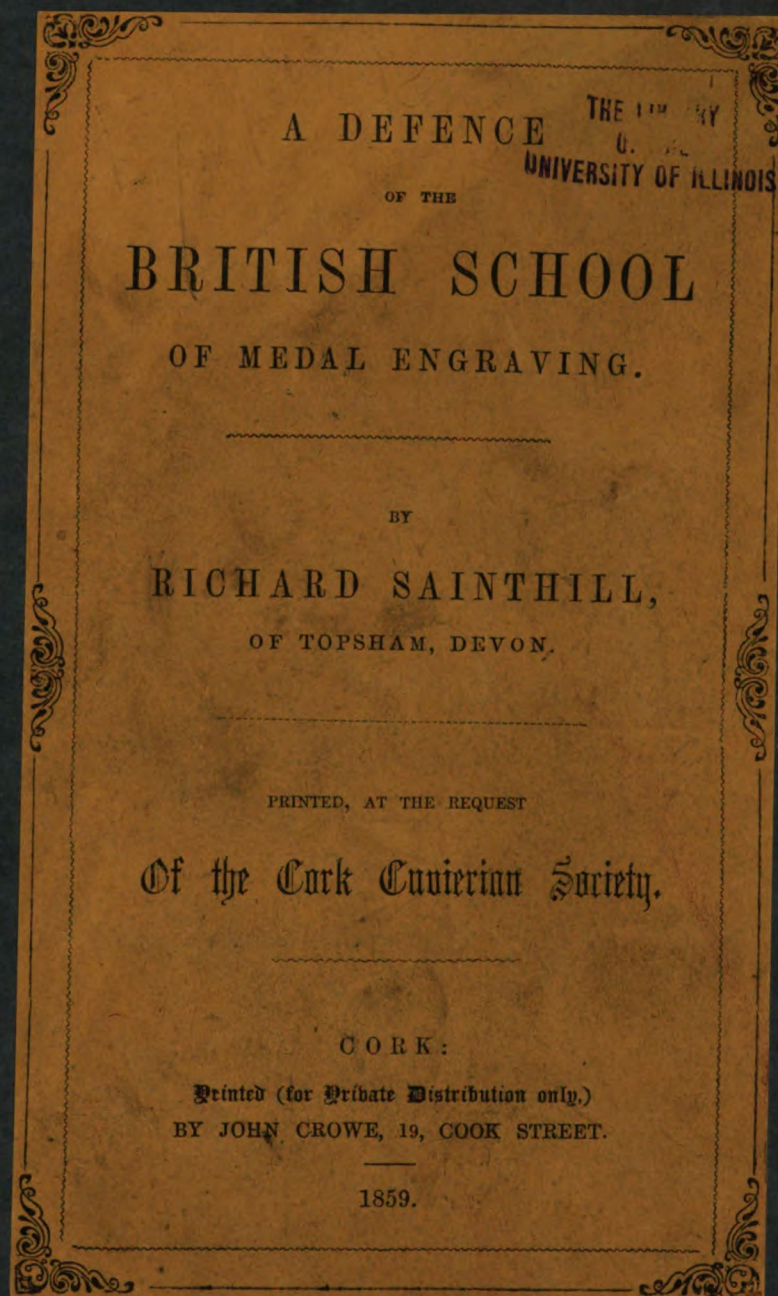
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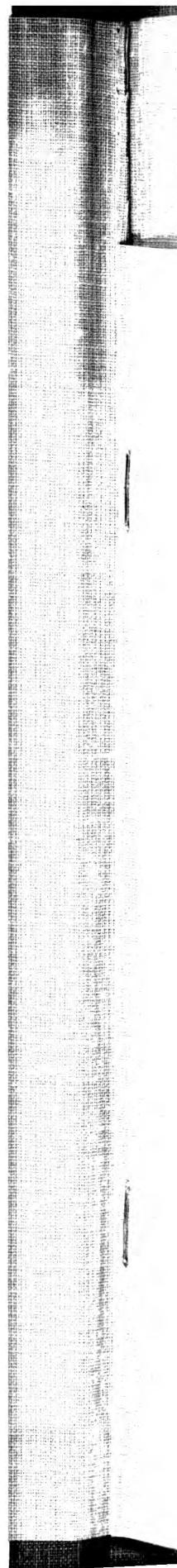
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A DEFENCE
OF THE
BRITISH SCHOOL
OF MEDAL ENGRAVING.

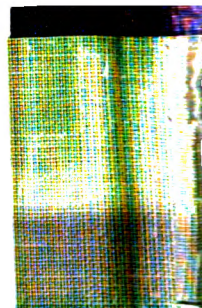
BY
RICHARD SAINTHILL,
OF TOPSHAM, DEVON.

PRINTED, AT THE REQUEST
Of the Cork Currierian Society.

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TO
PROFESSOR HARKNESS, PRESIDENT,
TO THE VICE PRESIDENTS,
AND TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE CORK CUVIERIAN SOCIETY.

THIS PAPER, "A DEFENCE OF"
"THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF MEDAL ENGRAVING,"

READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY,
AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,

Is most respectfully dedicated,

BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

RICHARD SAINTHILL.

Cork, 10th November, 1858.

C O R K
GOVIERIAN SOCIETY,
For the Promotion of the Sciences.

The first meeting of this Society for the Season, took place on Wednesday evening, 3rd November, 1858, at the Royal Cork Institution.

PROFESSOR HARKNESS, PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

There was a full attendance of members.

Mr. THOMAS CHANDLER, exhibited a valuable collection of slabs and fragments of the upper Devonian, or yellow sandstone formation, which he had procured from a Quarry, at Kiltorcan in the County of Kilkenny. The specimens displayed the fossil ferns, which flourished at the time of their formation; one slab presenting the perfect form of a fern nearly three feet in length, with the stems and radiating branches, leaves and fronds, beautifully marked.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out the nervation and markings of the plants, and remarked that wherever in the South of Ireland, yellow sandstone occurred, these fossils were found. The *Cyclopteris Hibernica* was peculiarly interesting, as exhibiting

the pinnæ with fructification so distinctly, and had been found in Berwickshire, associated with the remains of the *Pterichthys major*, the *Anadon*, and in some instances, with the *Coccosteus*, whence he inferred, that the yellow sandstone was more decidedly Devonian than Carboniferous, and these specimens were important as throwing light on the fresh water origin of the formation.

Mr. SAINTHILL said, since he had written the paper that he was about to submit to the Society, a young friend had brought him a number of the *Cork Examiner* containing a short notice, which he would read, of the national medallion. Had its able writer taken up the subject fully, no further consideration of the medallion, would have been requisite.

FROM THE CORK EXAMINER,

Monday Evening, June 21, 1858.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ART.

UNDER this title there exists in London a sort of autocracy which does not happily illustrate the old saying in favor of despotisms. Its movements have been generally speaking calculated to promote quackery in art instruction, dissatisfaction amongst teachers and discontent amongst pupils.

too

We were much amused by the perusal of a document with which we were favored a few days ago and which was received by the Committee of the School of Design from this great central body. This valuable relic was a circular, informing the Committee that for the future it would be expected the teachers should have under instruction one per cent. of the population. Of course, it would be two absurd for the department to enquire into the circumstances of this or indeed any other city. It was enough—they had spoken. However, as we do not belong to a department, and do not enjoy any large emolument for checking the progress of Art, we may take the liberty of endeavouring to ascertain how the facts really stand. One per cent. of the population of this city would amount to something over eight hundred. For this eight hundred, to whom art education is to be imparted, the present allowance is one master and two pupil teachers! It happens, however, that the eight hundred pupils cannot be got. There are about one hundred and fifty in the Central School of Design, and from three to four hundred can be got in those schools of the city which are under the National Board. The Christian Brothers do not accept the grant of the Board, and their Art School is ably conducted by the members of the order. The full number might

be had, but for a decision of the National Board, by which a grant was refused to the Presentation Order for their new and splendid school on Gallows Green, where over five hundred boys are educated, because *a small cross was on the top of the building*. But supposing the whole difficulty was got over, and the eight hundred pupils placed under the care of the Cork staff of teachers, what a monstrous delusion it would be to suppose, that the education they would then receive could be of any practical value. No doubt, this education for the million will look well in annual reports and parliamentary returns, and may greatly tend to the glory of the department. But the benefit of an infinitesimal dose of teachers in a vast flood of pupils will, in all probability, be so very diminutive, that in a short time even the ability of the department will fail to be sufficient to point it out. Instead of a great system of Art Education, Parliament and the country will see in it a gigantic sham, and in all probability will be inclined to class the department in the same category as its work. Undoubtedly it must awaken the anger of masters to find themselves obliged to convey art teaching to pupils in hundreds, and never to hope to have an *élève* capable of going beyond his pot-hooks and hangers. Such of course is the inevitable result where the attention has to

be spread over a vast extent of space. In all probability, too, it will raise an outcry amongst those pupils who really feel a desire for instruction, and if remonstrance be unavailing, compel them to quit a pursuit where for the future it will be impossible to find adequate training.

In every respect this department has been going from bad to worse. Of late years stinginess has become so prominent a qualification, that one is tempted to ask how are the vast sums appropriated which are voted by the state? Its assistance to local schools has gradually been dwindling, and is now, indeed, pretty much upon a par with the food given to that celebrated animal, whose fate is frequently quoted as a warning to the dispensers of short-commons. The salaries of the teachers were the straw a-day which the department gave to the steed under its control, but finding that animal obstinately continuing to live, they have deprived it of even that nutriment.

But we ought perhaps admit that it does still give some aid to art education. It gives models and examples at half price! Aye, and more it preserves a staff of inspectors to go annually amongst the schools and award a number of paper testimonials and copper medals. In the days before retrenchment had so completely borne sway, that is some two years ago, a hundred silver medals were offered for com-

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petition amongst the whole schools of the United Kingdom, no one institution to get more than five. Cork obtained three of these distinctions, and was very proud of them. The individuals entitled to the medals, however, were considerably disappointed at having to wait so long as two years for them; but they came at length—last week. When they did come it was found the alchemy of the department had been at work—a transmutation of metals had taken place; the silver medal had been converted into copper. Some kind of awkward apology accompanied the shabby gifts—but we think the department might just as well have brazened it out. The medal it was stated would not work in silver. Without the affectation of severe criticism, we might say that it would have been better if it did not work at all, as the design is bad, comprising only broken necked figures, such as Justice leering like a harlot, or Genius, recognizable only by the indications of the poverty which is so often his fate—especially when he has to deal with departments—or the effigy of QUEEN VICTORIA, that could not bear comparison with the head upon a penny. In future we would recommend to this body a change in the material for such prizes. Fully sixpence worth of copper has been spoiled in each of these pieces of ugliness. If the department wishes to pursue its rigid economy in the substance, and to exhibit the same elegant taste in the selection

of the design, we would suggest plaster of Paris as the material. It is very cheap, and would be about of proportionate value to the conception it would develop.

We are not ignorant that the department has hitherto done something for the development of art amongst the masses, nor do we wish to deny it such merit as it may be entitled to on that score. But within the last few years it has been sedulously labouring to undo whatever good it may have accomplished, and those desirous of seeing a genuine cultivation of the taste and talent existing throughout these countries must set themselves to work either to reform the department or sweep it away altogether.

A Defence of the British School of Medal Engraving, against the aspersions, publicly promulgated, at Sheffield and Manchester, by Members of the Science and Art Department of Education, South Kensington, London ; in the year 1857.

On the 5th February 1857, I addressed a letter to "The Critic, London Literary Journal, the opening paragraph of which was—

"SIR, I have read with extreme astonishment in your paper of the 2nd instant, that at the Inauguration of the new School of Art at Sheffield. H. Cole, Esq., C. B., is reported to have

stated to the meeting, that the department over which he presided, would give medals, and, "to get a medal worthy of such an occasion, they had sought all over Europe, and they had succeeded in obtaining the services of a *Foreign Gentleman*, of great celebrity."

The *Times* of October 12th, 1857, reports.

"Department of Science and Art, Distribution of the national medals for Drawing, among the Students of the Schools of Art in the United Kingdom, took place in the Manchester Town Hall." (9th October, 1857,) at this meeting, Richard Redgrave, Esq., R. A., Inspector General for Art, addressed the Students, in the course of which he is reported, to have said,

"It was these national medals, that were to be Distributed that night. He very much regretted that they were not able that night to give the Students the medal itself, which would be a very handsome one. In endeavouring to give them the very best work of art that could be obtained, they were obliged to go to the most eminent artists, and the artist on this occasion happened to be a *Foreigner*. He hoped that on future occasions *English Art* would stand well enough, to produce its own medals, but on this occasion the medal would be the work of M. Vechte, whose works stood forth pre-eminent

"in the Great Exhibition in Paris, amongst them
 "being that wonderful Shield, which was the
 "admiration of all the civilized world, and which
 "was in the Manchester Exhibition. M. Vechte,
 "was engaged to give them one of the finest
 "medals he could produce, and said, he was using
 "all his efforts to produce one of his choicest
 "works."

Now, what we had to infer from Mr. Cole's
 speech, Mr. Redgrave most distinctly declares,
 which is, that in the judgment of these Kensington
 Magnates, the English School of medal Engraving,
 does not at this time, possess a single individual, of
 abilities competent to produce a medal worthy of
 being given as a Prize to the successful Students.
 But a charitable hope is faintly indulged, that
 guided and instructed, by this "*Foreign Gentleman*
 of great celebrity," a time may be "looming"
 in the distance, when *English* medallic art,
 "would stand well enough to produce its own
 medals," that is, having been lifted up, set on her
 feet, and taught to walk, she might, yet really, *yes*
 she might, one of these days, actually run alone!
 to Mr. Cole, C.B.'s, and to Mr. Redgrave, R.A.'s,
 patriotic delight.

In the year A.D. 1757, say—a hundred and
 one years ago, my Father was serving as Mid-
 shipman on board the Saint Albans, of 60 guns,

Captain Webbe, on the Newfoundland station. I have heard my Father relate, that at this time, a Captain in the Navy, was appointed Governor of some dependency of the British Crown, (possibly Newfoundland? but I do not now recollect the place,) where the Governor in those days was absolute, himself, all and every thing. When he was leaving England for his Baratania, a friend, who doubted whether the indomitable Bull Dog of the Quarter deck would prove a perfect Solomon on the Judgment Seat, said to him, Jack, as Governor you will be the Judge, and have to decide every thing in your Island. Now take my advice. When you have heard a case out, and made up your mind, give Judgment, but give no reasons for it, no one may dispute your authority, but if you give reasons, every one will judge them, and they may come to the conclusion, that your reasons have neither sense nor justice, which would not be pleasant.

Now the Kensington Authorities, had the unquestionable right and power of employing any Engraver they pleased, and if Mr. Cole, at Sheffield, and Mr. Redgrave, at Manchester, had contented themselves with simply informing the Students, that a Medal was engraving for them, no open offence would have been given to the

English School of Medal Engraving, and even when the Medal did appear, and was found to be the work of a Foreigner, no surprise would have been excited. It would have been only the old story, *so English !* of patronizing the *Foreign*, and neglecting the *Native* artist. But when these gentlemen ostentatiously announce to great assemblages of Art and Science, Pupils and Patrons, "that their Medal is to be the work of a Foreign Gentleman of great celebrity, *as English Art does not stand well enough to produce its own Medals ;*" and when this Dictum of the Science and Art Department of South Kensington, is reported by the *Times*, and other great organs of the Press, and circulated through every nook and corner of the Empire, we have a right on behalf of the English School of Medal Engraving, to investigate these, their uncalled for but paraded reasons, to test them by facts, and then to form our own conclusions, whether the alleged reasons, have either sense or justice ? and to this consideration, I have to solicit your kind attention.

In contrast and competition with the National Medallion, I confine myself to a single Medal of the English School, and I have selected one of the three, (the Jurors,) given at the Hyde Park Exhibition, A.D. 1851 ; for as the Hyde Park

Medals were distributed by hundreds, over the length and breadth of the Empire, they are consequently, more generally known, than any other that I happen to have.

Mr. Redgrave, R.A., was one of "the Jurors of the Exhibition," in Hyde Park, A.D., 1851, and as such must have received, "the Jurors Medal," its Obverse bearing the portraits of Her Majesty and the Prince Consort, modelled by the late William Wyon, R.A., and engraved by his son, the present Leonard Charles Wyon. The Reverse designed and engraved by Mr. George G. Adams, also yet living, the design of which, obtained one of the three premiums of One Hundred Pounds each, in a competition open to Artists of all Nations. It is difficult to suppose that Mr. Redgrave, never opened the case, enclosing his "Jurors Medal;" and yet to me it is more difficult still to understand, how any one having examined this Medal, could have made use of the language attributed to Mr. Redgrave; so unjustly, as I consider depreciating the abilities of the living Medal Engravers of England. As a specimen of medal engraving, I have no hesitation in saying, I think it infinitely superior to the National Medallion. Contrast the sunny, living energy of the Queen's bust on the Hyde Park Medal with the National. In the latter

(which seems a composite, partly taken from Wm. Wyon's Guildhall Medal, and partly from the same Artist's Gothic Crown Coin,) we have a portrait of Her Majesty, very quiet, with rather a sleepy effect ; and considering the company, among which the Queen finds Herself placed, the less seen, perhaps the better ! The Reverse of the Jurors medal, consists of three Female figures, Industry encouraged by Commerce, and crowned by Fame. In the Exurgue, is a bust of Minerva, facing a steel yard, on the bar of which is suspended a wreath, all on a most minute scale, and of the most surprisingly high finish ; happily allegorizing, that the Rewards of the Exhibition, would be allotted by Wisdom, guided by Justice, contrast this "Iliad in a nutshell," with what is attempted on a Brobdinag scale, on the national, as Justice. The group on Mr. Adams medal, is composed of a sitting figure of Industry, plying a distaff, held by the left hand, and resting on the left shoulder. The right hand resting on the right knee, twisting the thread ; the figure semi nude, the face three quarter, looking to its left ; on which side stands Commerce, her right hand, resting on the right shoulder of Industry, towards whom she bends, and on the right of Industry, stands Fame, with a wreath in her left hand, which the right is about to place on the head of Industry.

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The Diameter of this medal is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the height of the standing figures, 1, $\frac{5}{8}$ th inch, their faces occupy one eighth of an inch. The faces on the national medallion are three eighths of an inch in length. Mr. Adams, therefore had only one third of the space which the national medal commanded, to pourtray expression of mind, yet how admirably is the protecting kindness of Commerce, the eager anxiety of Fame, and the modest gratification of Industry given; with all the power of a painting, with all the finish of a gem.

The attitudes of these three personages, are appropriately varied, but equally graceful; and the rendering of the human form, whether Draped or otherwise, exhibits all the beauty and delicacy of the Female figure, with equal truth and loveliness; contrast the undraped arms of Fame and Industry, with any on the national medallion, and the inferiority of the latter is striking. Mr. Adams' are true to nature, with all her softness, roundness, and delicate markings; more particularly we should notice, the exterior and interior bends, of the elbows, the wrists, and the hands. I have no fear in challenging comparison, by competent and unbiassed artists, between Mr. Adams' medal, with its only three figures, against the national medallion with its nine, for beauty

of Design, and superiority of engraving. I would submit, that the Hyde Park Fame is superior to Kensington Truth and Fame. Hyde Park Industry superior to Kensington Justice and Art Science, and Hyde Park Commerce, against the Kensington remaining five, say, Genius, Student, Ignorance, Time, and his little aid. Commerce does not come so directly in competition, by attitude, with any of these five figures, as the preceding. I therefore take her appropriateness of composition, and beauty of engraving, against theirs individually, on the same grounds.

In the Kensington Circular, "April 1858, No. 312," it is stated, that, "Sir Charles L. Eastlake, "P.R.A., and Daniel Maclise, R.A.," were Examiners in last years competition of the Students for the National Medallion. Let the Kensington Authorities, submit their Medallion, and the Hyde Park Jurors Medal, to these Gentlemen, as Examiners, and I will bow to their decision respectfully, if they adjudge the palm to Kensington.

I copy from the official printed paper that accompanies the National Medallion, (only noticing by the way that the size of the Medallion, is five inches, and 6-8th in diameter.)

"Description of the National Medallion, Executed in Repoussé by M. Vechte.

" The Portrait of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, occupies the centre of the Medallion. M. Vechte explains the Allegory thus. The principal figure at the top of the Medallion, is Genius, attended on his left by Justice, Truth, and Science, essential to an Academy of Artists; and on his right, by a Student meditating. In the back ground crouches Jealousy, or Ignorance, whilst Fame is proclaiming the merit of the successful Student; and Time, and a Youthful Genius, hold the Shield, to receive the Students name.

This Allegory is, if I may so express myself, thus worked out.

We have a shield of Achilles, Her Majesty's portrait in profile forms the centre, around which, the figures may be said to be grouped in a circle. They are generally on a scale of more than two inches in height. Immediately over Her Majesty's bust, we have Genius, who may be considered, as striding up an unseen hill of difficulty, the right foot fixing itself, while the whole left leg is stretched backwards, at its, at least, fullest extent. The right arm is extended, the hand clenched, resting against his temple. The left arm is stretched out in a straight line backward, holding in his hand a large wreath, but for what purpose? questionable. Apparently to bestow,

but we may consider Genius, rather acquisitive than distributive. A mass of drapery, having no peg to hang on, floats like a Summer cobweb in the background, one shred of which passes in front across the left groin of Genius, and must be accepted, as making him very respectable company for the bevy of surrounding females, who it must be admitted, do not seem to have considered the slightest rag of drapery requisite for their own toilet ; and it may consequently be inferred, would not have required any on him ; right in the pathway of Genius is a floating serpent, with open jaws and an extended fang.

To the left of Genius, we are told is Justice, a female figure seated as an Oriental, resting on her legs ; which are tucked under. Her dress having slipped down to her hips, she is stooping forward, the left side towards the Spectator. The left arm is extended, and the hand grasps we may conjecture, the one end of the scale beam. The scales stand upright on their edges in a labyrinth of tangled strings, which will require much time, and more skill than the lady seems to possess, to unravel, should she ever be called upon to adjudicate. With the recollection of McClise's "Justice," which shed its lustre on the Cork Exhibition of 1852, the contrast is that of the miserable inferiority of the Foreign delineation.

tion to the Irish. As McClise's picture was the original design from which he painted his fresco in the House of Lords ; and as it was exhibited in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1850, we may refer to McClise's Justice as a public notoriety. The pose, attitude, draperies, and accessories, are all admirably balanced, and the features, and expression in characteristic accordance ; the Personification of Justice, upright, unswerving, to the right hand, or to the left. And what have we before us in the National Medallion ? A half naked, crouching female, leering over her left shoulder, with one eye half closed, which would raise the idea of very gross Pantomime, but that such grossness as this, is inadmissible on the Stage ; and the remark of a Student in the Cork School of Design, is more applicable, that it is the portraiture of a *not* honest woman, indicating encouragement to the wavering.

We come next to Truth, literally to the naked Truth, a full length female figure, absolutely fronting the Spectator, without a vestige of drapery, except a long narrow floating scarf, which comes over the right arm, and passing into the background, crosses the left thigh, and again retreating, re-appears in front, over the left instep, its only effect, as it strikes me, being that

of ungracefully breaking the outline. Lady Truth is looking upwards with a painful expression on the lips, her right arm bent behind her head, and the right leg bent behind the left, a position, by which the equipoise of the human form is completely destroyed, and the person attempting it, must fall to the ground, unless leaning against a wall, and then even the footing would be shaky, and the whole weight being thrown on the bent arm, the position would be very painful. The left arm is extended downwards, the hand sustaining a mirror, thrown in the rear, but handy bye, should it be wanted?

Truth is succeeded by "Art Science," another nude damsel (not indeed very young,) and looking at us with staring vacant eyes, as if sorely puzzled with the Book before her. Here the floating scarf, passing from Truth, is turned to some purpose; collected in a mass, it answers as an Ottoman, on which Science sits, but ominously, with her back to Truth. The right leg extended, rests on the wings of Time. Another twist of the scarf forms a support to the left leg of Science bent inwards. The left arm is invisible, but the right is bent forward on the book, and the hand being filled with the end of the scarf, suggests the idea of a Schoolboy about to clean his slate with his handkerchief, and rid

himself of the presence, of what may have been a troublesome task.

Passing across the Royal circle we come to the Student, over whose head depends a heavy ungraceful bundle of the floating drapery, which by way of amends, in its descent, affords him a seat, with the assistance of his left leg drawn under the ham ; the right hangs fully extended. The right hand with a pencil rests on his chin, and the left with very clawlike fingers grips, what may be a sketchbook ? nature and the medallion widely differ in their extremities of the human form. In the fingers of the Student, of Fame, of Cupid and of Truth, Dr. Bell, would find ample materials, for an additional chapter on the human hand ; and in the feet of the Student, of Cupid, of Time, and of Science, John Hunter, may have added specimens, to his museum of the Curiosities, in man's formation.

Passing Ignorance, represented as an old man, with asses ears, we come to Fame, a full length female form, opposite to Truth, and in nudity, position, and attitude, balancing the picture or composition. Fame leans to the right, the right arm and leg extended to their full lengths, the left leg receding behind the right, and the left arm bent back, the hand resting on the neck ; the right hand holding a long trumpet, ready

when required to sound. In the lower centre we have Time, as an Atlas, upholding the circle, within which is Her Majesty's bust, Time sustains himself on a Shield, which we are to understand, a well fed little Cupid, has placed by the side of the old gentleman for the latter to inscribe on it, the name of the successful Student. But our venerable friend is sinking, crushed down by the pressure of the superincumbent Globe, with little power, or apparent inclination, to put pen to paper displaying a large pair of wings, which we recommend to the study of the Ornithologist, as some possibly belonging to "rara avis" of the planet Saturn ; the surface arrangement of the interior feathers,* being very different from any met with, on this globe of ours, where a passage through the air, is only attained, by the most perfect smoothness of surface, offering the least resistance to that element. On the Medal we have distinct but unequal tufts, successive steps, rather than an inclined plane.

I have thus far considered the National Medallion simply as a work of art, deemed capable by the South Kensington Authorities, from the

* The wings of several game birds, shot the preceding day, were laid on the table, for the members to contrast the arrangement of their feathers, with those in the wings of Time, on the medallion.

varied splendour of its merits, of raising the British School of Medal Engraving, from its present low Estate ; if indeed it is supposed by them, to have any Existence ?

In the mean time, announced by them as a work of most superior Art, we may presume that it is intended and expected, to influence the rising taste of the pupils, Male and Female, of the Schools of Design, to whom it is indiscriminately given. But then comes the Enquiry, is it a work of superior art ? is it graceful in composition ? is it correct in Anatomy and Drawing ? and have the figures, more particularly, Genius, Truth, and Fame, common, conventional decency, to warrant the group being circulated among the youthful Students, more particularly Females, in the Schools of Design, through the extent of the Empire, as their guide and model, in beauty, purity, and correctness of composition ?

I again appeal to Sir Charles Eastlake, and Mr. Maclise, to say, am I right, or wrong, in the adverse opinion I hold on all these points ? and if these Gentlemen decide in favor of the Kensington medal. I will most humbly apologize to Messrs. Cole and Redgrave, for my doubts, of their taste, judgment, and justice, towards THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF MEDAL ENGRAVING.

It is often remarked, that Artists are too fond of presenting their figures undraped, to exhibit their own powers, in delineating the human form ; but I am not aware of any Medal British or Foreign that presents such an unmixed assemblage "of Nature, unadorned by Art," as The South Kensington Medallion. As I am not very learned in Anatomy and Drawing, I have solicited the aid of my friends, Dr. Gregg, and Dr. E. R. Townsend, on the former subject, who have most kindly favored me with their opinions ; and another friend of mine on the Drawing ; and from all, permission to incorporate their papers with my own, thereby affording an instance that bringing up *The Reserves*, decides the fate of a contest.

RICHARD SAINTHILL.

FROM DR. GREGG.

64, SOUTH MALL, JULY 27TH, 1858.

MY DEAR SIR,

On examining the Allegorical Prize Medal, presented this year to the Arts Students, I confess I was very much astonished, when informed, that no English Artist could Design one so good. Alas ! should this assertion be proved to be cor-

rect, how low in Artistic taste and execution, have our Medallists descended ; particularly as the one now under consideration, has not a figure which does not shew some glaring fault ; so that I cannot congratulate the designer upon his knowledge of anatomical proportions.

Let us now take each one seriatim.

The first on the top and centre is Genius, a male figure nearly nude, in a most constrained attitude, the right arm bent, with the hand towards the temple. Considering the position of the fore arm, its muscles are preternaturally developed, while those attached to the ribs on the left side, are thrown into much stronger action, than the position of the outstretched left arm warrants, and gives the figure the appearance of too great breadth in proportion to the height. He seems too in a great fury, (with hair on end,) probably at the very peculiar leering countenance of the next figure, which by the scales of huge dimensions, is supposed to represent Justice. She is semi nude, as the strings of her petticoat have loosened, so as to allow it to fall down and expose a pair of deformed hips ; there is also a strong inclination to lateral curvature of the spine.

Contrast this figure, with one that I have before seen, and brought by this to my recollection.

tion, in a medal executed by the late William Wyon, R.A., of Sir Benjamin Brodie, where we have a female figure, kneeling, semi nude, lighting a lamp, the back represented in the same position, as this Artistic Medal, mark the strait and even outline of the vertebral column. And the graceful form of the hips in Mr. Wyon's, and the deformity (as before noticed) in the other will become apparent. And here we may also contrast the beauty of the female arm of Mr. Wyon's with the huge proportions of M. Vechte's arm.

Proceeding down, we have the anterior nude aspect of Truth, her right arm extended upwards to its fullest (a painful position to keep for any length of time), the forearm bent behind the head, the left arm and hand stretched down, and holding a mirror behind her. This forearm possesses a fault common to all the female figures, namely, being much too large in their proportions, and not shewing that graceful symmetry, which the nicely formed female ought to possess,

Art Science is represented by an extremely ugly and obese old woman. I cannot imagine why the artist has placed the left nipple, so as to appear behind the left arm certainly no one ever saw it placed in such a position in nature,

Passing upwards to the right side, we have the Student, with his head near the bent knee of Genius, the right hand holding a pencil close to his chin, the left hand and arm extended, holding a palette. The forefinger has all the appearance of having been dislocated, while the remainder of the fingers are like claws, a fault which also exists in the hand of Ignorance, a portion of which figure is seen a little in front, and represented as a Satyr, with the muscles on the anterior part of the chest, so much developed as to give one the idea of deformity.

Fame, also nude, holds a trumpet to her face between the mouth and ear, the right arm being nearly as thick as her thigh, ought to have sufficient strength to hold it.

Immediately below is Cupid, an unnaturally fat child, with distorted ancles and wrists, bearing the shield of the successful candidate, in a most extraordinary manner, between the deformed index and middle fingers of each hand, upon this Shield Old Time leans with his right arm. He is represented as an old man, with enormous wings, and a most painful expression of countenance, evidently sinking under some great superincumbent weight, which the artist has not accounted for. The left shoulder blade is placed in a most unnatural position, as no muscular power

that any individual could exert on himself, would by any possibility place it, where it is here represented, and his left knee seems to have been partially dislocated : while his feet have the same fault as those of Genius, and the hands of the Student and Ignorance, viz. more like claws than any thing human.

I think I have now shown what I stated in the commencement, the great number of errors, with which the medal abounds, and in my opinion, not such a one, as would be likely to make our Art Students, put all their energies into full play for competition.

Yours' Dear Sir, very truly

THOMAS GREGG.

FROM DR. E. R. TOWNSEND.

MY DEAR MR. SAINTHILL.

It appears to me, that the object of all Artists is, or ought to be, the production of such works, as will please, instruct, and gratify the public at large ; as those who constitute the class of Connoisseurs, form a very small part of the number, for whose pleasure, improvement, and admiration ; the picture, statue, or medal, has been designed.

Taking this position for granted, the first point to be considered, is, the purity of the composition, and the absence of all gross, disgusting, and indelicate subjects. And to ascertain, if the composition is calculated to improve the minds of those who behold and carefully examine it?

I ask, is the principal point effected, by this, I think indelicate medal?

Certainly not.

The selection of a series of naked figures of both sexes, placed almost in indecent positions, is certainly not calculated to improve the youthful mind: or to produce exalted, or virtuous ideas. Yet as this medal is to be distributed freely, among both sexes of Juvenile Students, I think it is open to the very grave objection, that its tendency will be, to accelerate the developement of prurient ideas. It was the custom of the Legislator of an antient state, to exhibit Vice, in all its hideous character to the Young, to deter them from the commission of Crime, and to lead them to a life of honour and virtue. We have no account of the statistical result, and the experiment seems a dangerous one. Yet this might appear to be the object of the framers of this medal, who unless they had something of this kind in view, should have in some degree, draped over, the reproductive organs, and not

have exhibited them, in excessively prominent proportions. Look at the full size of the mammary glands, the nipple and arelæ, particularly in the female figure of Justice. The figure of Truth stands before the eye, naked and uncovered, and delicacy almost forbids me in this letter, to mention the extreme development of the pubic region.

Whatever the human eye dwells on with pleasure, or with a feeling of awe and veneration, must be correct. No one would tire at looking on the figure of the Belvedere Apollo, or that of the Venus De Medicis, so beautiful are the proportions, so correct the taste. There, the feelings are not shocked, and the glaring impropriety of the Medallion characters, does not strike the mind. The sufferings of Laocoon, the agonized expression of the Parent and Sons, produces a feeling of awe, pity and regret, leaving *only* a sorrowful impression on the mind.

Anatomically speaking the limbs (on the Medal) are disproportioned.

The length of the left leg of the figure of Genius, seems excessive, and consequently the muscular development faulty; and the figure seems more in the attitude of a violent lunatic, than in that of an individual, calmly illustrative

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of Genius. If wildness constitutes excellence, the figure is undoubtedly—Perfection !

The female figure of Truth, seems so placed, that if unaided by mechanical support, she could not stand upright, in consequence of the centre of gravity, falling beyond the base.

In my opinion, the Medal ought to be kept hidden in the dark recesses of the Cabinet.

Yours very truly,

EDW. R. TOWNSEND.

October 1858.

Correct Drawing, being an essential requisite, in a School of Design, I solicited the opinion of an Artist of acknowledged ability, as to that of the Prize Medallion, who has favored me with the following remarks, for which I am much indebted.

NATIONAL MEDAL.

As the figures in this Medal, are supposed to be ideal figures, representing certain noble qualities of the human mind, they should contain all the highest elements of Beauty, as seen in the best Antique models, and in some rare specimens of living Nature. It is the reward of Excellence in Art, and should itself be a Model of Perfection.

tion, as far as it is capable, by a proper study of all that former ages have handed down to us.

Now passing over the extraordinary spoke—like composition of the figures on the Medal, and the extravagant and unreadable personifications given to each mental quality, I will just mention a few points in the mere drawing of the figures, that to any intelligent Art Student, must appear defective.

First then "Genius" (a male figure), whose form like the Apollo's, should be God-like, and as Winckelmann says, "large in their youthful unity," a perfect and lofty ideal in fact of what Shakspeare calls, "the vision and the faculty divine," is here represented, wanting not merely in dignity, but positively inferior in some proportions to the Student he deigns to crown. The upper leg of this heaven born Genius, is *shorter* than that of the humble youth, and the contour of the lower right leg, is *curved inwards* in a way that would lead one to suppose, the Tibia was *broken in the middle*. Then take the figure as a whole, and compare its proportions to the (female) figure of "Science." Now, it is a common fact, how much larger the Male figure is to the Female, but here the rule is reversed in the most glaring manner, for the torso of Science, *minus her head*, equals the *head and torso* of

"Genius," taken together, and if standing side by side with him, the small Genius **should** have to look up at "Science." Compare again the two lower portions of the bent legs, and that of "Science" will be found nearly, $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch longer, than that of "Genius."

There is a great show of internal anatomy in the figure of "Genius," but it is difficult to discover, how the *three* rows of serrations arise below the pectoral muscle on the torso. *Two* rows are all that can be seen in the Antique, and all that can be well accounted for, one, caused by the tendinous attachments of the Serratus Magnus with the upper ribs; the other, by those of the Obliquus descendens, interlacing with the former.

The head of "Justice," if compared with any standard of Beauty, is also very defective, for independent of having a hooked nose, the far cheek seems swollen, and wanting that severe, but delicately undulating character, which would become a figure of "Justice," and which may be seen on the face of Minerva, or Diana of the Greeks. The abrupt angle in the neck behind the ear is quite unaccountable, when we know, that in the Female form especially, the Trapezius muscle of the back, runs gently up the *whole length* of the neck behind, and is attached

to the occipital bone of the cranium. The twist of the head would give rise to a groove behind the Sterno Mastoideus, which enters behind the ear, but not to an angle in the outline of the neck, as is here expressed.

"Truth," seems one of the best of the figures in point of general outline, but it is wanting in some important points. The upper leg is wanting in that beautiful groove that is such a charm in the contour of the best Models, the groove caused by the Sartorius passing round the leg, immediately above the Vastus-Internus. Wanting this, the leg appears stiff and lifeless. The ear is also placed too far back from the face, if we consider the proper shape of the Female skull, which has the ears more forward than in Man. Knox says, "It must not be placed too far back in either sex, as it happens in the Jew, but it is further *forward* in *Woman*, than in Man."

In all the Female figures the waist is much too low, taking in every case, the position of a Man's. Knox in his "Anatomy for Artist's," says of woman's waist, "The waist is placed where man's is not, but the reverse. In man the waist is low, in woman it is high, commencing at the fifth rib, and extending to the eight and ninth. In man it commences with

“ the *last* rib, and extends to the haunches.”
“ Nothing in the Anatomy of the human frame,
“ has been more mistaken, than the fine form of
“ the waist in Woman.” (P. 115.) Compare
these remarks, and the best forms of the Antique,
with the personation here, of *Justice, Truth,*
Science, and Fame. They all seem to have been
studied, from vulgar models of the present day,
when low waists in dresses are considered elegant,
and seem to have influenced the Artist in his
study of Nature and Beauty.

The above points are what struck me at first
sight, and can easily be tested by every one who
is at all conversant with the noble specimens of
Antique, handed down to us, as models of
Beauty ; or who is familiar with the fine forms
of living Nature around him. These, taken in
conjunction with the evident want of all elevated
sentiment in the figures, make the Medal rather
a dangerous gift than otherwise, to the young
Student of Art.

A general conversation followed, in the course
of which a member remarked, that—

The extraordinary radiating positions of the
figures suggest the idea, that when the Medal

was soft, it was placed on a Potter's wheel, and spun round with such velocity, that the unfortunate group were flung with force, into their present painful positions. Poor Genius lost his head from the violence of the shock, and Fame and Truth fell on their backs, and lay senseless in the indecent positions, in which we find them.

Sir JOHN BENSON said he had listened with great pleasure and interest to Mr. Sainthill's able and elaborate critique on the Medallion, in every word of which he coincided, and, as a member of the Committee of the School of Design, he protested against the composition, as quite unsuitable to the purpose for which it was intended. He proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Sainthill, and begged that he would allow his paper to be published.

Mr. HEWITT seconded the proposition, and, as Vice-Chairman of the School of Design Committee, expressed his concurrence in Sir John Benson's opinions.

The CHAIRMAN having put the motion, which was unanimously adopted.

Mr. SAINTHILL said he would gladly comply with the request of the Society, and publish the paper; after which the proceedings terminated.

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The legal right of Mr. Cole, C.B., and his Brother Directors, to employ a *Foreign* engraver to execute the Prize Medal for *British* Schools of Science and Art, and thus to exclude British Art, from rewarding Native Ability, I do not dispute. But I do think the act is equally unpatriotic, uncalled for, and unjust. Where there is a known and unquestioned absence of native Art in any of its branches, it is both wise and patriotic, to invite and induce Foreign Artists to settle in the deficient country, and teach the ignorant natives, and then by patronizing the Students, to raise Home Genius. Usually where there is a demand, supply will follow. But purchasing Art in a Foreign Country for Home Consumption, is encouraging the Foreigner, and depressing, so far, the Native. And in the present instance, it is a Proclamation, by the Authorities at Marlborough House, throughout the length and breadth of the land, that we have not a single Native Engraver, of ability sufficient to produce a Medal, worthy of being given by " The Department of Science and Art," as a Prize to the Pupils of the Schools of Design.

On behalf of our native Engravers, I join issue, that this is untrue : and fortunately the Exhibition of 1851, at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, enables me to bring the question, fairly and clearly home, to all and every one, who will give the subject his consideration, as the Exhibition of 1851, was that of the Industry of all the World, the competition for the Designs of the three Medals to be given was very properly thrown open to all the World—£100 for each Design being the Premium. In consequence, One Hundred and Twenty-nine Designs by British and Foreign Artists competed for the Premiums. The First Premium was adjudged to Monsieur H. Bonnardel, a Sculptor of Paris, and the Die was engraved by Monsieur Domard, of that City. The Second Premium was obtained by Mr. Leonard C. Wyon, of London, who engraved his own Design, and the Third by Mr. G. G. Adams, also of London, who also engraved his own Design, and each Engraver was paid for the Engraving of his Die.

The Obverse of each of the three Medals was the same. The Busts of Her Majesty and the Prince Consort, were modelled from the life at Osborne, in A.D., 1850, by the then Chief Engraver of H. M.'s Mint, William Wyon, R.A. ; but engraved by his son L. C. Wyon, it being well known that for some years before his death,

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the Chief Engraver's eye sight was so impaired, that he could only model, which he always did, even when his sight was good, on a large scale.

I now call attention to the results of this Competition. No Foreign Engraver obtained a Premium for the Designs of the Three Prize Medals. Two English Engravers did obtain Premiums for designs, from which they also Engraved the Dies. The superiority in Design of the Native School of Medal Engravers alone, was therefore two to one against Foreigners, of all classes combined.

We now come to the execution of the Three Prize Medals of the Hyde Park Exhibition. They are well known, in London more especially. The Obverse of the three is English, we have then two English and one Foreign Reverse to compare and contrast; and I submit that either of the English Reverses, is superior in workmanship to the Foreign. But, merely for the sake of argument, supposing the works of the English Engravers were only equal to Mons. Domard's, I maintain, that the engraving of these Medals is of that high standard; and both these Young Artists remaining in London, the Marlborough House Authorities have not a shadow of justification, in having their Medal engraved by "a *Foreign* gentleman of great

celebrity ;" unless indeed, Mr. Cole, C.B., and his Colleagues can say, that they never saw the Exhibition Medals of A.D., 1851 ; and that being ignorant, they *assumed* English inferiority as granted. In my humble opinion the course which Marlborough House should have pursued, would have been to have issued a notice to all the Schools of Design, in the United Kingdoms, of the Medal they intended to have engraved, and calling upon the Pupils to compete for the honor of furnishing the Design ; the Reward, that the superior individual, and School, should be recorded on the Exergue of the Medal, in this manner

" DESIGNED BY PATRICK MURPHY,"

" SCHOOL OF DESIGN, CORK, 1857."

Has any one a doubt, (I certainly have not,) that the only difficulty would have been to decide among an overwhelming amount of excellence ? This done, they should have referred to the works of our *many* English Engravers of Medals, and selected an Artist as they thought best, I merely confined myself to those of the Exhibition Medals, as proof from them alone, that there was not a vestige of excuse, for ignoring British Talent, in Design and Execution, for this " Foreign gentleman of great celebrity."

R. S.



